

Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Via Zoom conference call
Tuesday, September 8, 2020, 7:00 pm

Present: Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Drew Lamb, Pat Johnson, Mark Brown

Guests: Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes), Noreen Bryan, Scott Bassage

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: Lakes and Streams and Conservation Commission sent joint feedback to the Planning Commission regarding the shoreland zoning revisions; the Chair will contact the PC to learn where that stands. Neal Maker noted an addition to the meeting agenda about Camp Road.
3. Approve minutes: Larry Bush moved and Neal Maker seconded to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2020 and July 28, 2020 meetings. The motion passed unanimously.
4. Fall Foliage Walk: The Commission decided to host its annual walk around the time that the Calais Fall Foliage Weekend typically would happen (they considered October 10). Drew agreed to lead a walk at Chapin Town Forest and also to seek permission for parking at the log landing. Stephanie will learn if Calais is doing any Fall Foliage activities and invite Eric Sorenson.
5. Ash Tree on Haydon Road: Haydon Road connects Upper Road to Balentine Road and is home to a very large, multiple-trunk ash tree. The Commission discussed considering the tree for EAB treatment. Larry informed the group that there is a 3-boled ash tree at the entrance to the Town Forest. The land deed description, in fact, references the ash tree. Members considered keeping a list of significant ash trees around Town that may be good candidates for treatment; Drew added that it may be wise to include a middle-aged tree with a single trunk that will be around for a while to come. (Treatment should begin before infestation; Calais hasn't had documented infestation yet.) Questions were raised:
 - *The treatment is injected in the cambium at the base of the tree; would a multi-boled tree need to be treated more than once?*
 - *When would the Town plan to start treatments (May/early June)?*
 - *Make a time plan?*
 - *Identify trees that are being treated for public education?*
 - *Prioritize trees on more traveled roads*
 - *Contact a person who does the treatments about price and process (PAT)*

Stephanie, Drew, and Julie planned to mark ash trees in the identified corridors on upper North Calais Road. Pat, Julie, and Drew will mark the corridor on West County

Road. Larry had mailed letters to all landowners where the ash tree education corridors are being created. These corridors offer education for residents about recognizing ash trees and may help people extend this recognition to their own property's trees.

6. Bliss Pond Town Forest: The Commission had discussed improving trail markers in Bliss Pond Town Forest, along with an updated trail map that includes the new markings. Larry updated the group on his efforts to this end: he got the stencil the Calais Trails Committee uses and coordinated with the blacksmith to order the trail sign materials. Drew has the tools to cut and knowledge to help with the stenciling of the signs on two Saturdays, potentially September 19 and 26. Larry will gather paint and auxiliary supplies and Drew will pick up lumber.

Larry explained that Walter Opuszynski works for State Parks and Rec and is in charge of trail systems for large portions of Vermont; he also serves on the Calais Trails Committee. He is doing GIS work to re-plot trails on the ground for an updated map and wants to build a bench for the Town Forest, along the Bliss Pond trail. Larry noted there is a lot more use of the Forest trails during COVID-19, including uses that have not occurred before (swimming and a fire, especially concerning during a drought). The increased use may require some communication with the public about permitted uses of the Town Forest. Jamie Moorby may be a good resource in thinking about how to address this as she has experience with people reserving the island for camping.

7. Updates from June Meeting: Drew reported that the school principal was receptive to the possibility of tree planting at the school when he spoke with her at the end of last school year. The Town Hall's steep slopes from the road down to the gravel (bushes, ornamental grasses) had been identified as a possible planting location. John McCullough (Town Hall renovation project manager) was delighted at the prospect of landscaping there and Hasso agreed to meet with the Commission to provide ideas. The Town Office front area may host three crab apple trees. These few areas for Town tree plantings involve communication with many groups and Town leaders and would not warrant a public meeting.
8. Resilient Roadsides Vegetation Report: Joanne Garton's efforts on this report included producing a "work plan." Stephanie informed the Commission that Selectboard member Sharon Winn Fannon had contacted her about a resident's concerns about roadside trees dying which he attributed to road maintenance practices. The Selectboard seeks to be conscious of roadside ecology and vegetation, and being careful our road care is aligned as such.

Stephanie pointed out that the former Roads Committee worked to protect the public space that is Calais's attractive rural roads. The group considered if there should be a tree committee, or if the Conservation Commission should work on this

issue. Scott Bassage commented that the report is “marvelous and very foresight-full.” The group considered a focused committee of the Conservation Commission or the Selectboard, based on the Resilient Roadsides Report to do this work; Stephanie will speak with the Selectboard Chair. A focused committee may attract volunteers who are specifically interested in tree issues and a commitment that is limited in scope to trees.

9. Start on a Work Plan: The Chair asked what the Commission’s pleasure is in terms of planning projects for the year ahead. Scott commented that the work plan may include choosing one or two areas that we think need conservation and working to use the money the Town has given us to protect important areas. Larry noted that Walter Balentine owns much of the Bliss Pond land; he has sold quite a bit lately, and the whole pond frontage and the land behind it (15-20 acres) could be an incredible acquisition for the Town. (Nobody could develop it because it’s shoreline or the outlet stream.) He questioned if the Land Trust could be approached to work with the Town for such a land protection effort. Scott noted there is a lot of development pressure on East Hill (near the old winery); Mark will look into a potential parcel of land there.
10. Other business: Neal was contacted by a resident concerned about trees getting cut along upper Camp Road (private road) and concerns about drainage. Neal had marked the trees and does not see it as an issue but wanted to make the Commission aware of this.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 7 pm.

11. Public comment: None.

12. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Date: 9/9/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas

Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 10/7/2020 meeting